



SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Financial and General Purposes Committee of the Governing Body (the "Committee")

held on Tuesday 19TH November 2024 at 17:30, in Meeting Room D Floor, Lisburn Campus

1. Chairs Business

a) Attendance and apologies

Present: Mr Alan McCrum, Mr Derek Wilson, Mr Tommy Martin (Interim Principal & Chief Executive), Ms. Majella Corrigan, Mr Steven Lee, Ms Pauline Leeson

In attendance: Mr Gary Ritchie (Deputy Principal Curriculum) 'DPC', Mrs Heather McKee (Deputy Principal Student Support Services) 'DPSSS', Mrs Emma Carson (Acting Director HR & Facilities), Mrs Claire Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Ms Claire Ward (Deputy Head of Finance), Mr Andrew Emmett (Acting Director IT & Finance), Ms Diane Weatherup (Head of the Learning Academy) Item 5E only

Apologies: John Nugent, Deborah O'Hare, Danny McConnell

In the Chair: Mr McCrum

b) Declarations of Conflict of Interests

The following conflicts were declared:

- Ms Corrigan declared she is employed by CCMS whose sponsor department is DENI. She is a current member of the Governing Body of Stranmillis College.
- Mr Lee declared that his wife is employed as a Deputy Head of School at the College.
- The Interim Principal & CEO declared his daughter is employed as a lecturer at the College.

- The Deputy Principal Curriculum declared his wife and sister are employees are at the College.

No action was taken in relation to any of the declared conflicts.

c) Minutes of the F&GP meeting held on 10th September 2024

Previously issued to all Members.

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 10th September were reviewed, members agreed they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting. The minutes were adopted on the proposal of and seconded by

d) F&GP Action Points from meeting held on 10th September

Members noted the action to include a visual graphic will be included in the next NDPB forecasting report.

2) Correspondence:

Previously issued to all Members.

a) SERC Budget Allocation 24-25

Members noted that the draft budget allocation is £47,112k.

b) Senior Staff Pay Award

The Interim Director of HR & Estates advised the pay award has been confirmed and will be paid into November salaries.

c) Capital Allocation Funding

The committee noted an additional £130k capital funding was received and has been factored into the College's capital plan for 2024/25.

3) Financial Items for approval

Papers previously issued to all Members.

a) Final Annual Report and Financial Statements for Year Ending 31st July 2024

The Deputy Head of Finance presented the report to the committee, she began by highlighting that these should be the final reports, however there is one outstanding item in relation to pensions that NIAO have identified for the sector.

The DHOF talked to the written report provided setting out the pension liability issue that has been identified by NIAO. It has been agreed that the actuaries will review the pension asset again and the DHOF provided a full explanation of the accounting treatment that was also set out in the paper provided.

In terms of the overall accounts, the committee noted that changes have been made since they reviewed the draft reports in September. Adjustments have been made in relation to staff pay awards, the deficit has reduced from £3,679k to £3,232k (£447k reduction in expenditure) and the net assets have increased by £447k (as a result of reduction in payables due to pay accrual changes).

The Interim CEO & Principal advised that a draft Report to Those Charged with Governance will be presented to Audit committee as part of their review of the reports and advised the work on the pension liability is expected to be conducted within the next week or so.

Agreed: On the caveat of the pension liability issue being resolved, the committee reviewed and approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements for Year Ending 31st July 2024 on the proposal of Derek Wilson and seconded by Pauline Leeson.

4) Financial Items for Information

Papers previously issued to all Members.

a) NDPB Budgeting and Forecasting Submission

Members noted the recent submission in paper 004A, the Deputy Head of Finance advised the latest return was submitted on 23rd October. The Resource Requirement is £47,012k and this presented no budgetary issues to the Department.

b) Period 6 Management Accounts

The Deputy Head of Finance presented the most recent management accounts and highlighted that total income (excluding Grant-in-aid) of £5,804k is £810k better than budget due to higher than

budgeted Skill Up income, Apprenticeship NI and Grant Income, being partially offset by lower than budgeted Step-Up and Commercial Income.

In terms of the full year forecast the £47,012k forecasted Resource Requirement matches the Resource Allocation target.

c) Finance Operational Report

The DHoF asked members to note the written report at 004C and highlighted that debt and supplier payment days were both on positive trends.

d) Estates & Capital Expenditure Report

The Acting Director of HR & Facilities talked to the written report at 004D and highlighted the following summary from the report:

1. PPP 2024 life cycle works are in progress and are nearing completion.
2. Recurrent funded projects are ready to instruct should funding become available.
3. DfE have confirmed an increase in capital funding allocation for 24/25 of £130K.
4. Energy consumption and costs for September 2024 were both slightly higher when compared to that a year previous, although this is reflective of the cooler temperatures experienced in September 2024.
5. Capital projects and other services being provided via the PSC framework are progressing satisfactorily.
6. The renewal process to retender both PSC and TSC frameworks is underway.

In response to a question from a member the Interim CEO provided an update on the feasibility study conducted on the installation of heat pumps.

5) Staffing Items for Information:

Papers previously issued to all Members.

a) HR Priorities 2024/2025 plan and status updates/HR Key Metrics Report

Members were asked to note the report, and the Acting Director of HR & Facilities provided an update on the progress of the priorities.

In response to a question from the Chair on employee relations, the Acting Director advised that the College have met with UCU and NEU and set out proposals for a joint consultative forum. She advised the current format is one forum and the plan is to have three forums to cover teaching, non-teaching, and senior staff. The committee noted this would be a useful way forward if it resulted in all trade unions participating.

In a discussion around workforce planning the committee were advised that in order to manage workforce planning a standardized template will be produced that can be used within CMT and be issued to the Department to provide updates.

In reviewing the key metrics report the acting Director highlighted the reduction in long term sick absence, this is a result of leavers through RtS and ill health retirement.

b) Employee Relations Update

Members noted the report at 005B and the Acting Director of HR & Facilities provided an update on current industrial tribunal cases.

The Chair enquired if the receipt of an ET1 form is when the College would first become aware of an industrial tribunal, the Acting Director confirmed that it is when the College will become aware that formal action has been taken. The Chair highlighted it would be useful for the committee to also be notified at this time to ensure they are properly sighted.

Action: The Chair requested that the committee had sight of ET1 forms for IT cases going forward

c) Equality Annual Progress Report

The Acting Director of HR & Facilities presented the report, and the feedback letter received from the Equality Commission for review. Members noted the extremely positive feedback received and commended the College on the report.

In discussion the Acting Director highlighted the commission had suggested improvements were made to the screening of policies and the Interim CEO advised that work has begun to standardize all policies.

d) Hybrid Working Pilot Verbal update

The Acting Director of HR & Facilities advised the pilot scheme has been reviewed but a decision has been paused until the new permanent structure has been confirmed.

e) Learning Academy Review

At this juncture the Head of the Learning Academy joined the meeting.

On the invitation of the Chair the HoLA presented an overview of the work of her department and highlighted the support that is provided to staff across the College. Members noted the emphasis on support for managers and how this has been a vital resource during the restructuring process.

The Chair thanked the Head of the LA for a very informative presentation and added that he is always struck by the breadth of work the department carries out. The Interim CEO & Principal further added that like so many essential functions in the College the Learning Academy budget has been severely reduced and so what the team are doing with vastly reduced resources is excellent.

6. Health and Safety Update

a) HASMAP Update

The Acting Director of HR & Facilities talked to the written papers at 006, she referenced the audit conducted by Walter Marks from Sheq Point in 2024 and advised that this report would provide an update on the seventy-three non-conformities identified in that audit.

The committee noted that 100% of all major non-conformities have been actioned, followed by 70% of minor and 72% of observed non-conformities.

The Acting Director further advised that following tender an award has been made to SHEQ.Point Ltd to provide professional services to the College on health & safety related matters including, advice on risk assessment, record keeping and delivery of training.

The recruitment for the post of senior technician has been completed and an appointment made. This postholder will co-ordinate the maintenance and monitoring of machinery and equipment within the College workshops to ensure safety and compliance.

7) Applications and Enrolments

Paper previously issued to all Members.

The committee noted the written report in 007, which provided an update on the College applications and enrolment figures, the Deputy Principal Curriculum highlighted the variances in the report and the current enrolment figures. He advised the committee that work has begun to develop new programmes for the coming years to further promote unique career pathways.

8) Policies for review

Papers previously issued to all Members.

a) Fees Policy 2025/2026

The Acting Director of IT & Finance presented the policy for approval and provided an overview of the proposed fees, he highlighted that FE and HE fees have increased in line with inflation at 12.5%.

Agreed: The Fees Policy 2025/26 was agreed on the proposal of Majella Corrigan and seconded by Pauline Leeson.

b) Finance Review

The Acting Director of IT & Finance asked members to note the financial policies had been reviewed with no substantive changes required.

- Anti Bribery Policy
- Budget Policy
- Treasury Management Policy

c) HR Policy review

The Acting Director of HR & Facilities asked members to note the HR policies below had been reviewed with no substantive changes required.

- Job Share policy (Lecturing Staff)
- Sickness Absence Policy
- Raising Concerns Policy (formerly WB policy)
- Career Break Policy (sector)
- Secondments Policy
- Disciplinary Policy for Non-Teaching staff
- Planting Commemorative Trees Policy
- Charity and Fundraising Policy
- Flexitime Scheme for Corporate Staff Policy and Procedure
- Conflicts of Interest policy
- Recruitment and Selection policy
- Sickness Absence Management Policy
- Special Leave of absence policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy

d) Remuneration of Governing Body Chairs and Members SOP

The Secretary to the Governing Body presented the remuneration SOP for review and began by advising changes have been made to reflect payment for members that are employed as public or civil servants. She advised the committee that after seeking advice from the FE director and consulting with the Interim Principal, it has been agreed that those members are eligible to claim for payment during working hours as long as they have confirmation in writing from their employer that any remuneration due and time worked for this position are truly additional to their existing job role

and not a duplication of salaried employment (unless allowed under the terms and conditions of employment).

Agreed; The amendment to the Remuneration of Governing Body Chairs and Members SOP was approved on the proposal of Pauline Leeson and seconded by Derek Wilson.

9) Any other Business

Action: It was agreed to reformat the agenda going forward to ensure there is an appropriate time balance for both finance and HR items.

10) Confidential

A sperate note was taken for this item.

With no other business being discussed the meeting concluded at 7.45pm